



Richard A. Muller, *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol 4, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 2003. Logos Electronic Edition, 2013.

The fourth volume of the series surely does live up to the preceding three in terms of quality and carefulness of scholarship. In it Muller investigates the doctrine of the Trinity as that doctrine was understood by Reformed theologians from 1520 till 1725. As with the earlier volumes Muller musters the evidence and sets it out clearly and – if not concisely – thoroughly. He begins with the Medieval background and proceeds forward in a slow march which takes the time to see variations in the landscape all along the way.

For instance:

From the Western catholic perspective, inherited by the Reformation, the development of ecumenical formulae concerning the Trinity did not cease with the close of the patristic era. The Western development of trinitarian doctrine rested not only on the medieval reception of the patristic materials and the subsequent analysis, codification, and expansion of patristic formulae in the schools but also and at least as importantly on the conciliar development of the doctrine in the west following the *filioque* controversy (p.19).

And

Just as the Reformation and orthodoxy stood in the Western trinitarian tradition, so also did they stand in the Western tradition of the discussion of norms in theology. But here, as we have seen in a previous volume, the magisterial Reformers and their orthodox successors stood in the line, not of the entire tradition of the west, but of that portion of the tradition that understood Scripture as the prior and necessary norm, and tradition as the secondary norm capable of offering probabilities in support of biblical argumentation. In the case of the doctrine of the Trinity, this placement in relation to the earlier tradition became the basis for a complex development of doctrine in the eras of the Reformation and of Protestant orthodoxy (p. 21).

And then

As far as the mind of the late eleventh century was concerned, there could have been no clearer example of the unbridled use of dialectic than the application of a nominalist or, at least, antirealist critique to the doctrine of the Trinity by Roscellin of Compiègne (p. 25).

This sort of intricate investigation allows readers to not simply understand the issues but more than that, to fully comprehend them and armed with that comprehension, fully appreciate the Reformers' advancements and their world along with their descendants.

Bizarrely, though, one seeks in vain for mention of Johannes Oecolampadius (though Calvin and Owen and even Melancthon are dealt with). This is a striking oversight given the importance of Oecolampadius's valuable *Apologetica* of 1526.

Brilliant, though, is the exposition of the Socinian controversy which is related in such a fantastic way that anyone doing research on the topic really must read it. Here's a snippet:

The sense of a Socinian menace, particularly as hidden under an appeal to Scripture alone against tradition, was registered also in a series of works written between 1637 and 1644 against Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants*, the most elaborate being Francis Cheynell's *Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianism* (1643). The beginning of controversy over indigenous Socinianism in England, however, awaited another event: it can be traced to the work of John Biddle, an Oxford tutor who, in 1644, was accused of heresy after having told his colleagues that his biblical studies had led him to deny the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. Biddle has been called the father of English Unitarianism and can certainly be credited with the introduction of a positive statement of Socinian teaching into English theology, prior to the arrival of exiled Polish Socinians in England after their expulsion from Poland (1660)—although, at least according to the published testimony of his followers, he had read only Scripture and had no knowledge of the writings of the Socinians (p. 94).

These four volumes are so utterly worthy of commendation that even the most flowery expostulation on their value would not measure up to their meaningfulness. So I will instead end this review with mention of the most severe shortcoming of the series: it is not presently in print.

The electronic edition is superb but it (as I've said before) MUST be brought back into print. I here publicly adjure Baker Academic to do it.

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